



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + April 11, 2021 AD + **Easter Season***

This Week: The Devotion of Sunday

God rested on the seventh day but did His best work on the first.

On the first day of the week He created light (Genesis 1:5), and ages later, He chose that same day to witness the dawning of an even greater light in the resurrection of our Lord (Mark 16:2). As if creation and resurrection weren't enough, our Lord also chose the first day of the week to pour out His Holy Spirit on the apostles for the sake of mission (Acts 2:1). Ever since that three-fold blessing of the week's beginning, Christians have gathered on the first day, rather than the seventh, to hear the teaching of the apostles, pray, and break bread (Acts 20:7).

It's how Christians rest: not by being inactive, but by trusting in the Lord's very best works: the creation of all things, the resurrection of the Crucified, and the gift of the sanctifying Spirit.

Sunday therefore looms large in Christian devotion and deserves some attention, especially during this Easter season. The Easter season itself is a "week of weeks," 49 days + 1 extra day for a total of 50 days. Christian time often adds one extra day to things, in recognition that our observance of the first day of the week is really just a foretaste to the even greater Day that we await. As we do so, Sunday is our consolation and sweetness, a source of renewal and object of our devotion.

About the Cover Art

Look closely at "Women at the Tomb" by Graham Braddock and you'll see, next to the light streaming from the open tomb, not only the stone door rolled away but also what appears to be several large hoops of thorns, recalling Christ's prickly crown. In the foreground, the conquered soldiers sleep as the women recoil in amazement at the angelic vision inside the emptied sepulcher. Does the whole scene shimmer as though wet because of the light, or because Braddock is leading us to reflect on the baptismal waters that unite us with the Easter mystery?

Why not “the Sabbath”?

People often wonder why Christians don’t still worship on the seventh day, or Saturday (*Sabbath* means *seven*). That question begs another question: why do we reject so many laws in the Old Testament? God is clear: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11). God also has other laws that we no longer follow in the Church, such as not eating eels or pigs (see Leviticus 11). Why do we follow some and not others—why worship on the first day of the week, and not the seventh, if we must also observe not to murder, steal, etc? The simple answer is this: Christ is the “end of the law” (Romans 10:4). What this means is that we are, in fact, freed from *every* Old Testament law given to Israel, including the laws regarding worship, diet, etc. However, some laws remain at work in creation (such as, “You shall worship God, not murder, etc.”), and some practices remain good and helpful, such as having one common day to gather for worship. Sunday, as the day of resurrection, is our day.

Daily Readings for the Week of April 28 (Easter 3)

S Daniel 4:1-18 1 Peter 4:7-11 John 21:15-25	Th Daniel 5:13-30 1 John 5:13-21 Luke 5:1-11
M Daniel 4:19-27 1 John 3:19-4:6 Luke 4:14-30	F Daniel 6:1-15 2 John 1-13 Luke 5:12-26
T Daniel 4:28-37 1 John 4:7-21 Luke 4:31-37	Sa Daniel 6:16-28 3 John 1-15 Luke 5:27-39
W Daniel 5:1-12 1 John 5:1-12 Luke 4:38-44	

These readings correspond to pages 1044-1074 in Volume I of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Sunday Devotion

So how might Sunday, as the common day of worship for Christians, shape our home and personal devotion?

First, remembering the traditional observance of Sunday among Christians may help. In the very early Church, Christians would often meet before sunrise (i.e., before work) for the first part of their worship (hearing the lessons and preaching), and then gather again in the evening for the Holy Supper. This led over time to a practice of having one service in the morning, usually the Chief Divine Service (Holy Communion), followed by a prayer service (Vespers) in the evening. Among Lutherans, it was also common to begin Sunday with Matins, or morning prayer, before Holy Communion. This schedule remains little used today, and made more sense when society followed a different time.

However, it does suggest a few trajectories for your own Sunday observance:

1) **Prayer and Supper.** Let *prayer* and *supper* be your two foci on Sundays: praying to God personally and gathering for the Supper with your fellow Christians. In doing so, you'll be joining a host of Christians who did the same throughout the ages.

2) **Reclaim Morning and Evening.** In line with this focus, don't narrow Sunday devotion to the chief service at Church but reclaim your Sunday mornings and evenings for prayer at home. Take an hour or half-hour to do it—even more! The matins and vespers services are readily available in Lutheran hymnals, or simply read Scripture and pray to your Savior. In the evening especially, don't let it simply become readying for Monday, but taking a few moments still to dwell in Sunday. Sandwich the meat of the day with prayer.

3) **Start Saturday Evening.** Use Saturday evening as a “day of preparation,” either worshiping that night at church or quieting yourself in prayer and meditation in preparation for starting your Sunday devotion early.